

Creating the Butterfly Garden at Hillsboro Elementary

Benefits of a Butterfly Garden

A butterfly garden is a beautiful and fun way to encourage students get outside for a variety of learning experiences. Here are some of the benefits and learning opportunities of a butterfly garden:

- ⊗ The importance of butterflies to the environment
- ⊗ Plants to which butterflies are attracted
- ⊗ Plants that are hosts for butterfly's caterpillars
- ⊗ The best habitats for butterflies and their caterpillars
- ⊗ Plants native to our area that attract butterflies
- ⊗ Butterflies in Loudoun County
- ⊗ Life cycle of butterflies and plants
- ⊗ What plants and butterflies need to thrive
- ⊗ Migration, hibernation, camouflage, mimicry of butterflies
- ⊗ The growing process for plants
- ⊗ Planting and maintaining the garden

You may use the butterfly garden, from planning it to caring for it, to teach a variety of lessons. Some broad examples are below.

- ⊗ **Science:** life cycle of butterflies and plants; how to care for the garden after it has been planted and how this helps butterflies
- ⊗ **Math:** Have students chart the growth of plants or butterflies they see at a certain time each day; encourage them to plan the garden using symmetry
- ⊗ **Social Studies:** Hold a vote for students to select plants, which demonstrates democracy and voting process, and how they need to be prepared by researching information before they vote
- ⊗ **Art:** take students outdoors and have them draw plants and butterflies, and other wildlife they see in the garden
- ⊗ **Writing:** Have students write a poem or story about what they see in the



garden; encourage students to keep a journal about the garden and what they experience there; write a report

Steps to Creating the Butterfly Garden at Hillsboro Elementary

The butterfly garden installed at Hillsboro Elementary is part of a school-wide greening effort initiated in partnership with the Newton Marasco Foundation (NMF). The NMF worked closely with the school—including the students, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), parent volunteers, and local businesses to plan and implement this effort. Here are the main steps taken to install the first outdoor classroom at Hillsboro Elementary:

- ⊗ Coordinated with the school principal as part of the school-wide greening effort.
- ⊗ Brought in local gardening expert to tour the school grounds, identify the best location, measure the area, and identify the potential plants for the garden.
- ⊗ Prepared and submitted Building Modification Request form to the Loudoun County Public School.
- ⊗ Secured donations for the plants and mulch.
- ⊗ Developed a ballot for students to vote for the plants they wanted for the garden.
- ⊗ Provided resources, including a notebook that was kept in the school library, about the plants and butterflies they attract for students to review and conduct their own research.
- ⊗ Held a school assembly to explain the importance of butterflies, the purpose of the butterfly garden, explain that they would be voting for the plants that would be plants, and provide information about the plants.
- ⊗ Each student was given a ballot, and votes were cast; many teachers used this as a class project.
- ⊗ The winning plants were donated by a local nursery and mulch was donated by a school parent.



- ⊗ Because the area was very overgrown, parent and NMF volunteers worked to prepare most of the garden area by weeding and cutting back some of the existing plants.
- ⊗ Coordinated through the principal to schedule a day where each class came out to work on the garden. All students continued to weed and clear away debris and plant the plants. Older grades, scheduled at the end of the day, watered the garden, and put down the mulch.
- ⊗ Some classes released butterflies into the garden.
- ⊗ Next school year, students will be in charge of maintaining the garden, and new plants may be added.

Additionally, the PTA used funds raised at the annual auction to have a pergola with benches installed so students will have a place to sit, observe, and learn at the garden, from watching plants grow and learning about taking care of the garden, to watching what kinds of butterflies visit and make their homes there.

Critical steps in installing an outdoor classroom:

- ⊗ Support of the principal
- ⊗ Identifying a teacher lead
- ⊗ Securing permission from Loudoun County Public School System through the Building Modification Request Form
- ⊗ Having parent volunteers
- ⊗ Getting students involved from the beginning, and keeping them involved
- ⊗ Securing donations and funding

